



Volume: 2, Issue: 5, 463-468
May 2015
www.allsubjectjournal.com
e-ISSN: 2349-4182
p-ISSN: 2349-5979
Impact Factor: 3.762

Soumitra Kumar Sinha
Associate Professor,
Department of History,
Kalyani University, Kalyani,
District- Nadia,
West Bengal, India

The reflection of modernist, rationalist and nationalist ideas in the writings of two great Bengali Muslim litterateurs: Syed Mujtaba Ali and Syed Wajid Ali (1919-1949)

Soumitra Kumar Sinha

Abstract

This paper seeks to explore the thinking of two extraordinary Bengali Muslim intellectuals in the realm of modernism, rationalism and nationalism in the period under review. So far in our study period, two major tendencies are discernible: i) On the part of the orthodox Muslim society, supported by some intellectuals, to identify Bengali Muslims with the Muslim world of the Middle East; and ii) On the part of most Hindus, to identify Bengali Muslims as aliens to Bengal, whose existence and interests could, as far as education, literature, politics and economy were concerned, be largely ignored. There was, however, a third tendency, which was gradually to gain attention: namely on the part of the Bengalis, both Hindu and Muslim, of a more rational, secular outlook to seek in tolerance and mutual respect. In this paper I shall try to analyse the secular and rationalistic mentality of Bengali Muslims which is reflected in the writings of Syed Mujtaba Ali and Syed Wajid Ali.

Keywords: Modernist Muslims, Muslim Literature, Syed Mujtaba Ali, Syed Wajid Ali

Introduction

Bengali Muslim intellectual Syed Mujtaba Ali's literary career during the study period under review, it can be said that after obtaining Humboldt Fellowship he went to Germany in 1929 for higher studies, studied for one term (winter 1929-30) in the Berlin University and then studied Comparative Religions in the Department of Philosophy in the Bonn University and obtained his D.Phil degree (Doctorate) in 1932 in Comparative Religions in 1932 for his thesis 'The origin of the Khojahs and their religious life to-day' under the supervision of Dr. C.Clemen, professor of Comparative Religion. Although Syed Mujtaba Ali, the famous Bengali litterateur did not made his name till then in his domain during the pre-partition period, he already began his teaching career in the capacity of the Director, Seminar Department of Comparative Religions(1935-1944) in the Baroda College and thereby indirectly influenced many Bengali and non-Bengali Muslim students to his own strong beliefs in the humanism, rationalism and modernism¹ Mujtaba Ali himself came into direct contact with Rabindranath Tagore and learned humanism while studying at Visva Bharati.

Moreover the present study will be also discussed a little bit about the life and activities of Syed Wajid Ali (1890-1951), the well known Bengali litterateur. Syed Wajid Ali, B.A.(Allahabad), B.A.(Cantab), Bar-at-law(London), was a barrister in the Calcutta High Court and became a Presidency Magistrate of Calcutta in 1923, from which post he retired in 1945. His literary career was of 30 years duration spanning from 1919 to 1949. In 1919, his first Bengali article 'Atiter Bojha' (The burden of the past), was published in Sabujpatra (edited by Pramotha Chaudhury). Within a few years he made a name in the Bengali literature as an essayist and short story writer. In 1925 he was chosen as the President of the Bangiya Musalman Sahitya Samiti (The Bengali Muslim Literary Association). Syed Wajid Ali was a progressive rationalist thinker. In the beginning of his literary career he started to publish 'Bulletin of the Indian Rationalistic Society', an English monthly edited by him. In December 1932, he founded the Gulistan, a pictorial Bengali monthly which was a vanguard of the Hindu-Muslim unity.

Syed Mujtaba Ali: As *Satyapir* (Composite Identity)

Moreover Dr. Nurur Rahaman Khan commented in his book entitled 'Variety and Style in Syed Mujtaba Ali's Works' that Mujtaba Ali had written a number of articles concerning the literature, culture and tradition of the Bengali Muslims.

Correspondence:
Soumitra Kumar Sinha
Associate Professor,
Department of History,
Kalyani University, Kalyani,
District- Nadia,
West Bengal, India

The main rhythm of these essays were love for mother tongue, love for tradition (local) and desire for unity of mankind in the world of culture and thought.² Among the articles published before the partition the following three can be included within this category— (1) ‘Bangali Musalmaner Bhabishyat Sahitya’ (The futuristic literature of the Bengali Muslims, Monthly *Mohammadi*, Chaitra 1341), (2) ‘Sabhapatir Abhibhashan’ (The Presidential Address, *Al-Islam*, Baisakh, 1346), (3) ‘Muslim Sanskritir Herfer’ (Inter-changing pattern of the Muslim Culture, *Chaturanga*, Asarh, 1346).³

Besides that Mujtaba under the pseudonym of *Satyapir* wrote a number of serialised articles from 13th August 1945 to 26th April 1946 in the daily *Ananda Bazar Patrika*. According to Dr Nurur Rahaman Khan earnest desire of the writer for the Hindu-Muslim unity or Unity among the Bengalis (irrespective of their religion) was reflected in these writings which were published on the eve of the partition.⁴

Dr. Syed Mujtaba Ali has written a long foreword for Sudhir Kumar Dasgupta’s small booklet entitled ‘Pakistan and Self-Determination’ published in 1946. The foreword is a mirror of Alisahab’s political thinkings. He has presented same viewpoints in the columns of *Satyapir* in the daily *Ananda Bazar Patrika* during the pre-partition days. By establishing the hollowness of the artificial two-nation theory he has written: “There was no economic pressure on the Maulavis and the Pundits to bring them together and force them to produce a fusion of orthodox Shastric Islam and Hinduism, but the Muslim peasant had to come in daily contact with the Hindu weaver, and the Hindu carpenter could not very well afford to non-cooperate with the Muslim mason. As a consequence we have a fusion of Hindu and Muslim cultures in India, resulting in common folk-religions and a common language, literature, architecture, painting, music, dancing and common habits even in minor matters as food, drink, dress, ornaments and amusements”. Dr. Nurul Rahman Khan commented that the (forthcoming) partition of the country was identified in that foreword as a wrong and retrograde step.⁵

Then after the publication of Mujtaba Ali’s ‘Deshe Bideshe’, a wonderful travelogue / belles letters in 1949, it immediately earned wide acclaim from intellectual and literary world and awarded and acknowledged by the Delhi University as the best literary creation in 1949 in Bengali and as a mark of honour the writer has been awarded with Narasingha Das prize. Dr. Suniti Kumar Chattopadhyay, the internationally acclaimed linguist has remarked that he thought that the publication of Dr. Syed Mujtaba Ali’s ‘Deshe Bideshe’ as a noticeable event in the history of the Bengali literature. He went on to add that by maintaining different kind of beliefs regarding different kind of beliefs regarding different religions or in the last word regarding the supernatural world, the human beings belonging to the same ethnic race and linguistic group become totally different from the aforesaid group — and for preaching this false and wrong theory when there emerged amongst the Muslims a strongly powerful group regarding the two-nation theory meaning the Hindus and the Muslims are two separate and different nations. Moreover when there were countrywide murderous assaults, ethnic cleansing, and compulsory expulsion of millions of people leading to the partition of India, then at that particular time, along with some liberal minded right thinking Muslim personalities one highly educated Bengali Muslim by writing this wonderful book in the common language of the Bengali Hindus and the Muslims, silently expressed protest against the doctrine and destructive activities of the aforesaid group, and proved that though belonging to different religions, the

Bengali Hindus and the Bengali Muslims are actually people of a same mental culture and ethnic group. Dr. Syed Mujtaba Ali has shown through his book that the religion cannot create indelible difference in the midst of the Bengali ethnic race which is included within the greater Indian nation and although India and Pakistan are different states politically, yet in essence, thought and conception these are not different, moreover it is difficult conceptually to be different.⁶

The establishment of the *Gulistan* (1339 B.S., Agrahayan) is an eventful chapter of S. Wajed Ali’s life. Centering round the ‘*Gulistan*’, he had built up a particular goal oriented literary and cultural assembly— a desirable environment. In the monthly’s cover page following words were used to be mentioned: “*Gulistan*. Vanguard of Hindu-Muslim unity. Editor—A.H.M. Fakhru Islam Khan.” The monthly’s first page used to contain editorials. At the editorial masthead the following words used to be printed, “*Gulistan*: Progressive pictorial monthly organ. Patronised by Khanbahadur Hashem Ali Khan, ex-Minister of Bengal. Founded by Mr Syed Wajed Ali, B.A. (Cantab), Bar-at-Law (London)”.⁷

Professor Syed Akram Hossain has written, “By observing the list of writers of the ‘*Gulistan*’, one could feel the aristocracy, wideness and importance of the journal in the contemporary period. The list is mentioned below: Kazi Nazrul Islam, Dr Kudrat-I Khuda, Dr Mohammad Shahidullah, Abbasuddin Ahmed, Kazi Abdul Wadud, Kedarnath

Chattopadhyay (Prabasi), Tarasankar Bandyopadhyay, Pramathanath Bisi, Buddhadeb Basu, Sajanikanta Das (Sanibarar Chithi), Kabi-sekhar Kalidas Ray, Barindranath Ghosh, Pabitra Gangopadhyay, Anurupa Devi, Prabhavati Debi Saraswati, Indira Debi, Manilal Bandyopadhyay, A. K. Jainul Abedin (Naba Yug), Humaytm Kabir, Khan Moin-uddin, Zulfikar Haidar, Comrade Abdul Aziz, Phanindranath Mukhopadhyay (editor, Bharatbarsha), Dhiraj Bhattacharya, Radharaman Chaudhury (editor, Prabartak), Biswanath Ray (editor, J anaseba), Sourendramohan Mukhopadhyaya, poet Kader Nawaz, poet Nirrnal Das, et al.”⁸ Those who used to edit different regular sections of the *Gulistan* were—Women’s World: Anurupa Debi, Chhayar Maya (magic of the Shadow or the film-world): Chabi Biswas (actor-Director), Abbasudilin Ahmed, Birendrakrishna Bhadra.⁹

Professor Syed Akram Hossain has remarked further, “In the decade of the forties, one of the philosophical aims of the monthly *Gulistan* and the ‘*Gulistan* assembly’ were- ‘victory to Bengal’ and ‘the independence through the Hindu Muslim unity is our desire’.

The fourth annual festival of the *Gulistan* in 1944 was rather significant in the light of the socio-political and economic whirlwind situation of India.”¹⁰ The founder of the journal and the chief guest of the meeting, S. Wajed Ali delivered the following speech: “The Bengali (ethnic) race is consisting of both the Hindus and the Muslims. In order to attain Bengal’s cultural progress, economic progress and artistic progress, the Hindu-Muslim unity is required. Without it, the ethnic race’s (Bengali) progress could not be achieved completely. The Hindus and the Muslims can be united through literature and the ‘*Gulistan*’ was established for the reason.”¹¹

Then Chapalakanta Bhattacharya, president of the meeting observed: “The aim of this journal is to attain mutual friendliness and bond of kinship between the different communities and classes, the Hindus and the Muslims by remaining closer to each other for a long time in the length and breadth of entire India themselves, had built up this friendliness and bond of kinship as part of the same nation and same genealogical race, but all on a sudden due to some

selfish politicians' clash of interests that (age old unity) was hampered. I know when the auspicious day of union through literary pursuits will come, by standing under the shadows of mango trees of Bengal we can sing collectively in one voice that day the eulogical song of our motherland—. 'Bande Mataram'¹²

Syed Wajed Ali: as a social philosopher

Now let us have a glance towards Syed Wajed Ali's writings in order to understand his sociological outlook. In his article entitled 'Sahityer Lakshya' (The goal of the literature), he observed, "If we analyse about the different branches of (our) literature, then our poverty becomes crystal clear. History is a very essential element for the formation of a nation. But it should be admitted with regrets that till now no such historical work of Bengal is ever written in Bengali through which real nation formation can be made. We will have to proceed towards this path with an open and unprejudiced outlook. For that (objective) nation's welfare must remain at heart. When all of us irrespective of all races and castes will have to reside in this country, then the historians should strive for that path of welfare in which path unity and fraternity is possible. It can be possible only by neutral and undisturbed mind."¹³

He again observed in the same article, "Think a while about the social history and discussion about the society. By reading the books which were written so far about this aspect it cannot be understood at all that there exists a distinguished and essential part of Bengal's society named Muslim community in this country. Prof. Benoy Kumar Sarkar once remarked that here the University students are more well acquainted with the social life of the Russian peasantry than_ the social life of the Bengali Muslims. We cannot protest about Benoy Babu's remarks. It can be clearly understood that our sociologists could not have carried their duties properly. Karl Marx was a Jew, but we find in his 'Das Capital' condition of the labourers of all religious communities and what a detailed analysis of the capitalist society. I have to say with sadness that till now our writers could not attain the unprejudiced mentality of Karl Marx or other European writers (philosophers). Can anyone deny that for the formation of one indivisible nation such liberal thoughts and outlook are essential?"¹⁴

Again in the same article he has commented, "Of course we, the inhabitants of the Orient know it pretty well that a religion cannot stand or remain complete only by depending on the visible ever-changing universe and the materialist creations. For religion, an unchangeable universal philosophy is also essential. All religions are based on such one and the other universal philosophy. For a litterateur also such a spiritual principle is a must. By analysis, we can see that the fundamental theoretical and philosophical unity exist among the few religions with whom we have, relations in the country. In this respect, there is no particular difference between the Hinduism, Islam, Christianity and Buddhism, In reality, all the religions are based on the following principles, (a) the Creator of the universe is the Almighty Auspicious Supreme Being and (b) humanism. These two principles came into being in diversified forms in different religions. We will have to circulate widely the message of love and unity and we will have to translate into practice in real life the ideals of love and unity based on these two fundamental principles in this multi-religious country. In this respect, life and attainments of the Saint-emperor Akbar is a shining example."¹⁵

Then, in another article entitled 'Bangali na Musalman' (The Bengali or Muslim), he has commented, "There is no such race (ethnic) in this world which do not have their own language, in which they strive to give concrete form to their imaginations coming out of their heart. Only those races were immortalised in this world— which have given enough endeavours to the service of their mother tongue. For example mention may be made of the Greek, Hindu (ancient Indians), Arab and the Iranian races. In Iran Arabic civilization was spread particularly. For some centuries Iran was part of the Arab empire. But still the Iranians did not forget about their mother-tongue and the motherland. The literature that was created in the Farsi language (Iranian) by the endeavours of the litterateurs like Firdausi, Rumi, (Omar) Khaiurn, Sadi, Hafiz et al is unparalleled in the world. That literature placed the mental power of Iran in a permanent place in the world civilization."¹⁶

He has continued to say in the same article, "Just as the love for the mother-tongue created literature, likewise the love for the motherland initiated the beginnings of powerful state-power, independent self-determining life (of the nations). It is quite unfortunate that recently a group of fraudulent persons created the illusions among their co-religionists that there is self-contradiction with patriotism in Islam. And geographic patriotism (nationalism) is contradictory to the Islamic ideals. This propaganda is being carried on with a force for quite some time in Bengal."¹⁷

He again commented in the same article, "Now take the case of India. If we ask the Punjabi Muslims about his identity, he will say he is a Punjabi, if you ask the identity of a Hindusthani Muslim, he will reply that he is a Hindusthani, if you ask identity of a Sindhi Muslim he will say that he is a Sindhi. All declare the identity of their respective countries (regions). However nobody doubts about their Muslim identity. But if you ask the identity of a Bengali Muslim he will reply that he is a Muslim. If you ask about his country, he will say either Noakhali or Comilla, either Hooghli or Burdwan. He feels ashamed to straightaway disclose his identity as a Bengali. As long as this mentality stays, till then how can the Bengali Muslims attain high places in the life and activities of the country (Bengal). Because inferiority complex will tie up his wings."¹⁸

In the same article he said, "The Hindus were not responsible for the lack of development of Muslim culture in the Bengali literature, the Muslims were mainly responsible for that. Till now literary sense is not fully awakened among the Bengali Muslims. The Bengali Muslims do not purchase or read books (Bengali). Highly educated aristocrat Muslims do not write in Bengali; In this situation how the Muslim culture, their way of speaking can penetrate into the literature? The main reason for the want of the Muslim influence in the Bengali literature is the Bengali Muslim's apathy and negligence. Besides that there is also orthodoxy. In politics a talentless person can be enforced through the election to the position of a minister or to any other higher post. But to attain Bankim or Rabindranath's place in literature, and to influence the country's literature like them, inborn genius and superhuman earnest endeavour is required. Simply by causing hue and cry and by groupism this glory cannot be attained."¹⁹

In his article entitled 'Bhabishyater Bangali'(The Bengalis of the future), he has commented, "For geographical reasons India is divided into certain well defined divisions and Bengal is one of these. Now let us discuss what specialties Bengal possesses for which it took different, shape from the other regions of India. First of all, the particular feature that arrests

our attention is that of the linguistic unity. In this wide geographical region all the inhabitants irrespective of their race and religion use one language; and that is the Bengali language. Secondly, in general there is such an ethnic unity among the people belonging to different religions, for that it is not easy to identify anybody to which particular religion he belongs.”²⁰ Scholars can easily identify any Bengali from a non-Bengali Identity. In Bengal the racial admixture between the different races like the Dravidians, the Aryans, the Mongoloids and the Semetics took place for centuries after centuries and for which an unique but well defined ethnic race evolved which can be called as the modern Bengali ethnic race. Moreover this Bengali ethnic race has got certain particular features for which they can be easily differentiated from the peoples of the other provinces of India. For example the Bengali is peace-loving; he dislikes the war, fighting and killing. The Bengali is intelligent, emotional— he loves from the core of his heart music, literature, arts etc.; he nurtures liberal views regarding religion, he does not like orthodoxy at all.

In the article entitled ‘Hindu-Musahnan’ he remarked, “In this country mainly two communities inhabit—The Hindus and the Muslims. This is quite certain that Bengal’s good days (prosperity) will not come until the two communities will learn to love each other, and the people belonging to these two communities will learn to think themselves to be Bengali first and then as the Hindu or Muslim. The Bengali’s main problem is how to create this beneficial mentality. While discussing this problem three questions crop up; and the solution of the problem depends on their answer. The questions are— (1) What is the cause of the present conflict between the two communities? (2) By adopting which means that conflict can be resolved? and (3) By what means intense sense of unity between the two communities can be created”²¹

He has commented further in the same article, “At present the hatred or the general tendency for conflict is rather strong. What is the reason for it? I think the following reasons are mainly responsible for the recent state of conflict. For example, (1) the present process of historical education, (2) undesirable influence of the religious heads or the clergy, (3) the influence of communal minded literature, the economic competition of the middle class service-holder, (4) the domination of this middle class service-holder in the present political life. (5) the wicked desire and an ominous dream for the restoration of the communal (theocratic) state of the past, (6) different mode of life style, (7) want of common festivals and institutions, (8) lack of any kind of futuristic clear and wider co-operative (common) ideology, and (9) undue influence of the non-Bengalis in the present state of life of the Bengalis”.²²

Moreover, surprisingly enough, though not a Marxist, Syed Wajed Ali was fully aware of the fact that the middle class dominated politics and the class interest was mainly responsible for the communal antagonism. He remarked, “Naturally therefore due to the class interest and the one-sidedness of their outlook (of the middle class) cornered all the problems in the political life of India barring the scramble for shares in the service sector which ultimately vitiated the politics of the country.”²³ Then in the same article in order to find out the solution out of the impasse, he remarked, “The first solution is to widen the politics to such an extent which naturally will be resulted into making mass economic interest or the economic interest of the masses the first and foremost aspect of the political movement”²⁴.

In the same article he has commented further, “If we analyse the ideal of all India nationalism, then the name which comes uppermost in our mind was that of Mughal emperor Jalaluddin Akbar’s. He first saw the great dream of the combined nationality of the different religious communities of India like the Hindus, the Muslims, the Christians and the Parsis. He was the real original founder of the Indian Nationalism”.²⁵

Again in another article entitled ‘Sahitya’ (The Literature) he has spelt out, “For the Indians,—as well as for the Bengalis, secular state is the only possible and desirable ideal. Four hundred years ago the great emperor Akbar realised that fact quite well. It is the only possible ideal by which India’s administration can run perfectly well—and not by any other ideal. Here people belonging to different religious persuasions inhabit. Therefore, any religion belonging to particular community cannot be made state religion. Only by keeping the ideal of a secular state in front of us we will have to advance towards the path of life”.²⁶

Syed Wajed Ali visualized future independent India as federation of states which is surprisingly similar to the demand for autonomy or more power for the state in a federal structure rather than the existing centralised quasi-federal structure of the Indian polity. In an article entitled ‘Jati O Mahajati’ (The Nation and the Federation of Nations or the Great Nation) he remarked, “This India of ours is a vast country. Here people belonging to different languages, religions, castes and clans or tribes inhabit. Therefore it is better, to call India a federation of states and the Indians a federation of nations. In that condition it is the duty of our politicians to discuss the Indian problems, with a tolerant mind to honour sufficiently the outlook of the others, and earnestly try to run the activities of the state with power, discipline and high ideals collectively”.²⁷ In the same article he also concluded by saying, “We should always remember that India is not a single nation (state) - this is a concert of great nation (Mahajati Sangha). And keeping this View in mind, we will have to work.”²⁸

Therefore from the above discussion it is very clear to us that Syed Wajed Ali was a socially committed intellectual who was a secular minded rationalist and humanist writer.

Unfortunately however, even such a liberal minded intellectual temporarily receded into conservatism which finds reflection in his article entitled ‘Bangali Musahnaner Sahitya ‘Sadhanar Path’ (The path of literary practice for the Bengali Muslims) which was published in the monthly *Mohammadi*, *Paus*, 1336 B.S. (i.e. December 1929-January 1930). Actually the article was written as a mark of protest to Maulavi Abul Hussain’s article entitled ‘Taruner Sadhana’ (The Meditation of the Youth) published in tile Saogat. It should be mentioned here that Abul Hussain belonged to the ‘Sikha’ Group’s ‘Buddhir Mukti Andolan’ or the ‘Emancipation of the Intellect movement’. Kazi Motahar Hossain of the same group has written another article under the same caption like that of Syed Wajed Ali, but in defense of Abul Hussain’s article, which was published in the Chaitra 1336 B.S. issue of the monthly *Mohammadi*. Then Nazir Ahmad Chaudhury has written another article as a mark of protest of Kazi Motahar Hossain’s article, which was published under the same caption in the Asarh, 1337 B.S., issue of the monthly *Mohammadi*.

Abdul Kadir of the Sikha group also took part in the debate. Much later on he has recollected that controversy in an article entitled ‘Syed Wajed Ali’ (which was published in the *Uttaradhikar*, a literary organ of the Bangla Academy, Dacca, in its March-April, 1977 issue) that Syed Wajed Ali in that article (‘Bangali Musalmaner Sahitya Sadhanar Path’), uttered

those words regarding 'Din-Ilahi', and properly criticising that "I have written not too long an essay in the Paus, 1336 issue of the monthly *Sanchay*". Therefore, it can be said that the above mentioned article of Syed Wajed Ali created quite a stir among the Bengali Muslim intelligentsia. However, it seemed that probably Syed Wajed Ali misunderstood the viewpoints of Abut Hussain in the article entitled 'Taruner Sadhana', because Syed Wajed Ali himself once used to run and edit 'The Bulletin of the Rationalist Society' which was published for the first time in 1919 and that was much before 'Buddhir Mukti Andolan' or the 'Emancipation of the Intellect movement's organ the *Sikha* came into limelight in 1926. Therefore Syed Wajed Ali, himself a protagonist of rationalism, apparently should not have opposed the rationalistic views of others until and unless there was a some sort of misunderstanding.

Any way even that conservative stance of Syed Wajed Ali was just a passing phase in his eventful career, because in December, 1932, Syed Waj Ali established the Bengali journal the *Gulistan*, which was a vanguard of Hindu-Muslim harmony and centering round this paper a powerful progressive cultural circle grew up. Moreover even after the communal division of the country, Syed Wajed Ali stood firm to his commitment towards secularism, stayed in India like Syed Mujtaba Ali and Kazi Abdul Wadad, and in 1949, just before he was attacked with the cerebral thrombosis which partially paralysed a portion of his body thereby putting an end to his eventful literary career, his book 'Akbarer Rastra-Sadhana' (Akbar's practice of State-Craft) was published wherein he has analysed in detail about Akbar's humanist ideals and his experiment with religious neutrality. It would not be out of place to mention here that 'Akbarer Rastra-Sadhana' was approved as a Rapid Reader by the Calcutta University for the Matriculation examination, 1952. In 1949, Syed Wajed Ali has written *Ibn Khalduner Samaj- Bijnan* (Ibn Khaldun's Social Science), which was published in the same year. Incidentally, it may be mentioned here that Ibn Khaldun was a famous philosopher of history of the medieval period. Therefore, we can safely conclude with the remarks of Professor Syed Akram Hossain, wherein he says, "Syed Wajed Ali's sense of history, power of consideration and his far-sighted futuristic reflection of thoughts was indeed surprising in the midst of religious narrowness, communal antagonism and the bewildering quicksand of the two- nation theory and in the dark transitional period of national calamity due to the allurements- induced politicians' ill attempts and vile propaganda".²⁹

Conclusion

The complex issue of the Bengali Muslim's quest for modernity is closely interlinked with their quest for identity. Although occasionally artificial tensions for their identity crisis are being brought from outside creates religious orthodoxy in the Bengali psyche, that mentality does not become permanent for a long time. It is because narrowness regarding religion is against the Bengali nature. The Bengali nurtures a natural love towards anything new. He does not discard new ideas, new customs, and new ideals only because of their newness; on the other hand only after verification he wants to determine the value of the anything new. The Bengali likes more the culture of ideas than the physical labour. If he gets the opportunity and the advantage he becomes absorbed in the culture of ideas leaving aside his works. The Bengali likes rural life and natural beauty more than the urban life. Bengal's history is not vitiated with the

wild religious conflicts. The Hindus and the Muslims of Bengal easily and freely stay side by side with each other. Moreover the history of the last thousand years has established an intense relationship and unity among themselves. Now there is no hesitation by calling them one ethnic race. The economic interest and the problem of Bengali race is one. Moreover Bengal's economic interest is different from the economic interests of the people of the other provinces of India. The Nature God created this difference of interest. Moreover the population and the power and influence of the two major communities— the Hindus and the Muslims, is almost equal in this county as well as in Bengal. Then due to the prolonged and close contact with the European civilization a kind. of culture has developed in Bengal, which naturally looks beyond the future and the universal humanism. It is experimentally true that Syed Mujtaba Ali and Syed Wajed Ali's writing and rationalistic thought not only riches Bengali literary works; their humanistic thought and anti-communal teachings created a space for communal harmony between Hindu-Muslim communities in Bengal.

References

1. Khan Nurul Rahaman, *Syed Mujtaba Ali: Jiban Katha* (Syed Mujaba Ali: A Biographical Sketch), Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, Dhaka, 1st edition, May, 1990, p.75.
2. Khan Nurul Rahaman, *Mujtaba-Sahityer Rupbaichitra O Rachanashaili* (Variety and Style in Syed Mujtaba Ali's works), Bangla Academy, Dhaka, 1st edition, June, 1990, p.219.
3. Ibid, p. 305.
4. Ibid, p.297.
5. Ibid, p.448.
6. Chattopadhyay Sunitii Kumar, article on '*Deshe Bideshe*' in the special issue on Syed Mujtaba Ali entitled 'Majlishe Mujtaba' in '*Koroke*' little magazine. ed. By Bhowmich Tapas, 1st edition, Boimela 2001, Kolkata pp.9-10.
7. Hossain Syed Akram (ed.), *Collected Works of Syed Wajed Ali*, Bangla Academy, Dacca, 1st edition, February, 1985, Vol.I,p.575.
8. Ibid, p.576.
9. Ibid, p.576.
10. Ibid, p.576.
11. Ibid, p.576.
12. Ibid, p.576.
13. Ali Syed Wajed, 'Sahityer Lakshya' (The Goal of Literature), Collected Works of S.Wajed Ali, edited and compiled by Syed Akram Hossain, Bangla Academy, Dacca, 1st edition, November, 1985, Vol.II,p.508.
14. Ibid, p.509.
15. Ibid., pp.510-11.
16. Ibid, Vol. II p.497. Article entitled 'Bangali na Musalman' (The Bengali or Muslim).
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid, p.498.
19. Ibid, p.499.
20. Ibid, Vol.1, pp.281-82; article entitled 'Bhabishyater Bangali' (The Bengalis of the future).
21. Ibid, p.303, article entitled 'Hindu-Musalman'
22. Ibid., pp.303-4.
23. Ibid, p.308.
24. Ibid, p.308.
25. Ibid, pp.311-12.
26. Ibid, p.20 Article entitled 'Sahitya' (The Literature)

27. Ibid, Vol II, p.513. Article entitled 'Jati O Mahajati' (The Nation or Great nation or the federation of nations).
28. Ibid, p.514.
29. Ibid, Vol.1, Preface entitled 'Prasangata', pp.5-6.